



TAU INSTITUTIONAL PROJECT REPORT



It is with pleasure that I present my Teaching Advancement of Universities (TAU4) institutional report for 2022 -2023.

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1. Project Overview

The project title is:

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM: A DESIGN-BASED RESEARCH ON THE USE OF MOBILE DEVICES

The project is aligned to the [UFS Teaching and Learning Strategy Plan](#) (2019 – 2024), [Revised Integrated Transformation Plan](#) and the [Digitalization Implementation Plan](#) which anchors my practice with respect to teaching and learning and leadership.

This project aims to promote digitalization among a group of teacher educators through collegiality by creating a Community of Practice (CoP) as a platform for sharing knowledge and emerging practices with one another. The project was prompted by the fact that the university is equipped with high technology-based resources which are in my view not utilised well to prepare young academics who will in turn prepare students for future careers within a global ICT-rich environment. Many academics continue to rely on traditional teaching approaches instead of modern approaches that include ICTs. Furthermore, I considered that this project will make a change among teacher educators who are hesitant to use the ICTs tools that are provided in their institution or sometimes do not use ICTs available at their institution due to external factors such as fear of the unknown. In part, I also wanted to use this project as a platform to resolve the “digital divide” among academics and the school-based support teacher educators who are supposed to be models for our student teachers but are lacking the ICT skills identified as essential for their own profession.

2. Project events

The main goal of this project was to track and understand the development of teacher educators’ capacity to use digital tools and apps in their module teaching and thereby transfer appropriate digital skills to preservice teachers. To achieve this goal, the project begun by purposively sampling a group of 10 permanent employed teacher educators (lecturers) and obtaining appropriate mobile devices to be supported by the university and/ or the Faculty of Education. The procurement of tablets took some time and delayed the project as it had to undergo several finance approval processes. Thus, the project could not start in July – December 2022 as initially envisaged. The tablets were finally delivered in November 2022, and the decision was made to continue with project the following year (in 2023).

In the second year of the project, an ethical clearance application was submitted, and approval received in the first semester of 2023. The delay in obtaining tablets, also had an impact on

the ethical clearance application, since the ethics applications system at the university closed between November and January. The Project kickstarted and the launch was scheduled for and happened immediately in April 2023 with the participating members of the CoP receiving tablets (See figure 1 below)



Figure 1: Teacher educators receive tablets.

Teacher educators as selected participants attended Intervention training conducted by the researcher. The selected teacher educators (lecturers) had to lead and pilot the use of the digital tools relevant for the content he or she is teaching and selected apps to teach the content as part of the demonstration. The decision on selected tools was done by participants as the study is based on design-based research.

The major outcome of the review process for the upcoming event is to develop a digital application [intervention worksheet](#) (that outlines stages of implementation of the digital tools with a description of how each stage would be characterized); Generate design principles that can be used by other teacher educator practitioners and preservice teachers. All the participating lecturers from each department collaboratively took part in the planning, assessment and/or refinement of the intervention worksheet tool to be developed during the next training (See Figure 2 below).

Selected participants were also able to engage in cross-observations by permitting other colleagues to observe their use of digital tools to help prepare other practitioners to use a similar tool. The first semi-structured interviews of teacher educators were conducted by the principal investigator after their first observed lessons and the final data source will be a second semi-structured interview after the completion of the teaching experience with a digital tool.



Figure 2: Exploring available and accessible apps

The final phase of the project will involve each teacher educator (lecturer) conducting their own project activities with students (preservice teachers) in their own modules. From the lecturers to the student teachers (university students) to the school-based mentors (classroom teachers) when our students go out for Teaching Practice (Work Integrated Learning), the Community of Practice will keep spiralling and hopefully the “digital divide” will become narrower and narrower!

3. Closure

This project proposes an innovative strategy that a higher education institution, one research site and single program at a time, can undertake to be successfully to address the challenges of digital transformation. More precisely, the project uses different sources as stated in project overview to collect data. This project specifically deals with digital transformation and the anticipated output is to change the implementation of ICT integration in higher education institutions. The output of the project to date, is [abstract acceptance](#) to present a proposal at Thirtieth International Conference on Learning, Jul 12, 2023 – Jul 14, 2023 at University of São Paulo - Auditório Nicolau Sevcenko, São Paulo, Brazil. The manuscript is titled:

“Teacher Educator’s Experiences of Integrating Mobile Devices Into Their Teaching: A Case Study Of One University In South Africa”

4. References

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